

Becoming a Community of Truth
Mike Sullivan - 2008 Xenos Summer Institute

(John 3:19,20) “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

The absence of truth is a barrier to vital Christian community.

(Romans 12:5) “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

(Ephesians 4:14,15) As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

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(Ephesians 4:17-19) So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

(Ephesians 4:20-24) But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

(Ephesians 4:25) “Therefore, laying aside *falsehood*, *speak truth* each one of you with his neighbor.” Why should we do that? “FOR we are members of one another,” he says. We speak truth because it is consistent with who we are as members of one another.

Confess your sins to one another

(James 5:16a) “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”

Definition of confession: Biblical confession involves agreeing with God that our actions or behaviors are wrong and acknowledging those wrong actions or attitudes to another person.

Confession always assumes an _____.

Confession always involves _____.

Misconceptions about confession

1. “Confession to others is necessary in order to gain or keep _____.”

“The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of . . . confession (and) penance . . . Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the authority of the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ.”¹

(Hebrews 2:16) “It was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.”

(Hebrews 7:23-25) “There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him.”

(Romans 5:1) “Therefore, since we *have been* justified through faith, we *have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”

2. “Since God alone ultimately forgives sin, there is no need for _____.”

This is a Protestant over-reaction.

A critic of confession in Wesley’s bands: “what a scene is hereby disclosed! What filthy jokes will be opened when the most searching questions are answered without reserve!”²

Do we want to be a community of truth or not?

Jesus is full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. (John 16:13)

The Father abounds in love and truth (Ex. 34:6)

(1 John 1:7) But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The costs and benefits of confession

Costs:

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (Ligouri, Mo.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), pp. 373,374.

² Adapted from D. Michael Henderson, “John Wesley’s Use of Confession,” *The High Calling*, The Francis Asbury Society, spring 2007, p. 11,12.

Benefits:

1. Confession may allow you to _____ God's forgiveness.

(Psalm 32:3,4) When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.

2. Confession releases God's power _____.

Building a community of truth:

1. Are we willing to be transparent with each other?

"If ruthless transparency was such an integral part of (Wesley's) movement, what caused it to be discontinued?"

"Groups for interactive accountability were supplanted by methods which allowed *the presentation of information without application*, like the Sunday School and Christian Endeavor."³

2. Are we willing _____?

Proverbs 13:18 "If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept correction, you will be honored.

3. Are we willing to be transparent, _____?

4. Are we willing to share our sin with people we know _____?

"There seems to be a trend ... toward forming accountability groups from people who are not close associates."⁴

5. Are we able to name where in our church folks regularly share the truth about their life?

(Acts 2:46,47) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

³ D. Michael Henderson, "John Wesley's Use of Confession," *The High Calling*, The Francis Asbury Society, spring 2007, p. 10,11.

⁴ Ajith Fernando, *Reclaiming Friendship*, p. 137.